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December 2, 1962

MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESIDENT

SUBJECT: Alsop-Bartlett Story and Stevenson

The Alsop-Bartlett story on Stevenson seems to be wrong in almost every particular. I attach the relevant excerpts on a separate sheet.

1. The story states "only Adlai Stevenson . . . dissented from the Executive Committee consensus". This is false. In the course of the deliberations, he made certain proposals, though none so incompatible with the consensus as the proposals made by several others for an air strike, but no more than they did he dissent from the eventual consensus.

2. The story states that there was "disagreement in retrospect over what he really wanted" and goes on to attribute to "a non-admiring official who learned of his proposal" the following statement: "Adlai wanted a Munich. He wanted to trade the Turkish, Italian and British missile bases for the Cuban bases."

This statement is wholly wrong. In both papers I showed you yesterday morning, Stevenson specifically opposed doing anything at this point about the Turkish and Italian bases. He wrote: "Turkey and Italy should not be included in the initial offer. Their inclusion would divert attention from the Cuban threat to the general problem of foreign bases. Furthermore, Turkey and Italy should be consulted in advance." And again: "The effect in Turkey, particularly if there is not careful advance preparation, might be very serious."

The British bases are not mentioned in any of Stevenson's proposals.

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3. The story states that there is "no doubt that Stevenson preferred political negotiation to the alternative of military action." This statement is wholly wrong too. Stevenson emphasized that the political offer must take place "within the scope of vigorous US military action to defend our security." He added: "An offer in effect to exchange Guantanamo for the Soviet sites in the absence of US military response to the Soviet moves [Stevenson's italics] would be weak."

4. Alsop and Bartlett apparently never discovered what Stevenson, in fact, proposed, which was a neutralization of Cuba involving the termination of all foreign military build-up and the dismantlement and evacuation of all foreign military installations, all under UN observation. Stevenson wrote, "By 'neutralization' we would mean a result along the Austrian type.... Such neutralization and demilitarization would immediately and drastically reduce the troublemaking capability of the Cuban regime, and would probably result in its early overthrow." Neutralization would, of course, have meant, in effect, a trade of Guantanamo for the Soviet bases.

Stevenson also favored making this proposal in the initial presentation before the Security Council rather than at a later stage in the discussions.

Both the proposal and the timing were rejected -- and rightly so. But the suggestion in the Alsop-Bartlett story that Stevenson favored a Caribbean Munich is grossly unfair -- and shows the number of people who still have their knives out for him.

Clayton Fritchey and I have worked out the following statement which would be issued by "a spokesman for Governor Stevenson" in response to press inquiries:

"The story is false and malicious. It rests on the allegation that Governor Stevenson 'wanted to trade the Turkish, Italian, and British missile bases for the Cuban bases.' This is a total fabrication. It further charges that Governor Stevenson 'dis-sented' from the consensus of the Executive Committee and preferred 'political negotiation' to the policy of the quarantine. This is also wholly untrue."

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3.

Unfortunately I have to go to Maxwell Field, Alabama, this afternoon to speak at the Air War College tomorrow morning. I will be back tomorrow afternoon. If you have any thoughts or misgivings about the statement, you might want to communicate them to me before four o'clock or to Clayton thereafter. Stevenson is out of town; and, when Clayton discusses the matter with him tomorrow morning, he would like to be able to say that you had seen the statement.

Arthur Schlesinger, Jr.

as:gs

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Excerpt from Report of the Joint Chiefs of Staff

Only 241st Stevenson, who flew down from New York on Saturday, dissented from the Executive Committee consensus. There is disagreement in retrospect about what Stevenson really wanted. "Adlai wanted a Munich", says a non-admiring official who learned of his proposal. "He wanted to trade the Turkish, Italian and British missile bases for the Cuban bases."

The Eisenhower camp maintains that Stevenson was only willing to discuss Guantanamo and the European bases with the Communists after the neutralization of the Cuban missiles. But there seems to be no doubt that he preferred political negotiation to the alternative of military action. White House aide Arthur Schlesinger was assigned to write the uncompromising speech which Stevenson delivered at the UN on Tuesday and tough-minded John McCloy was summoned from a business conference in Germany to work with Stevenson in the UN negotiations.

In any case, the President heard Stevenson out politely and then gave his qualified approval to the McNamara plan.

(Dictated over phone
by Clayton Fritchey)

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The Cuban Missile Crisis Revisited

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The Cuban Missile Crisis Revisited: An International Collection of Documents, from the Bay of Pigs to the Brink of Nuclear War

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